

## Frenchman Bay Regional Shellfish Conservation Program

### State Planning Office Regional Challenge Grant Proposal

December 11, 2009

In August of 2009 shellfish harvesters and municipal officials came together to discuss a serious problem that is affecting the shellfish industry around Frenchman Bay. For many reasons several municipalities in the area have not had or been able to maintain a local shellfish ordinance that allows more local control and support of the shellfish industry. Local shellfish ordinances are authorized by 12 M.R.S.A. Section 6671, which is administered by the Department of Marine Resources (DMR). The local, or regional, ordinance allows a municipality to work on conservation, stock enhancement and other means to protect the resource. Two tools are the ability to restrict the number of licensed harvesters and to close areas to harvesting for purposes of increasing the number of legal size clams. Over the past two seasons that have had a large number of Red Tide closures around the State, the shellfish resource in the region has been grossly overharvested by clammers coming into the area from communities where flats are closed. Without an ordinance it is impossible to prevent this type of over fishing.

From initial meetings a committee of harvesters began a process of reaching out to seven communities clumped around Frenchman Bay for support in the development of a regional shellfish management/conservation ordinance. Seven communities have chosen to work together to develop the ordinance, Sorrento, Sullivan, Hancock, Franklin, Ellsworth, Lamoine and Trenton are in that process now. A committee of harvesters, municipal officials and DMR staff have developed the ordinance, which would be only the second such program in the State. Five towns in the Georges river region have had a program for several years. The ordinance committee and a committee of officials from the seven communities that are working on the Interlocal agreement needed to move the program ahead have been able to make good use of the work done in the mid coast but have also spent considerable effort molding the model ordinance from DMR and the Georges river documents into a program for this region. Both the ordinance and Interlocal agreement are attached to this proposal. A draft budget and list of capital needs for the program has also been developed.

The mission statement developed is “These towns will act collaboratively as stewards to preserve, protect, manage and enhance the shellfish resources and ecological well being of the Greater Frenchman’s Bay Region and to insure a sustainable harvest of shellfish and opportunity for those who make their living on the tide. “

At this point the ordinance and agreement are in near final form and all seven communities have agreed in principal to move ahead, with the understanding that they will be responsible for ongoing financial support. Each community will need to accept the program at a Town Meeting or Council ordinance procedure. Of great concern to the communities is the timing and funding of the startup of the program. All seven have a July to June fiscal year and the optimum time to get the program up and running is April or may of 2010 in order for it to be in effect for the prime season. This is at the end of a budget cycle and will make the raising of local funds more difficult. It is the intent of this proposal to request a one time boost to help with personnel costs to get the program started this year. All member communities are being asked to look for surplus items needed for operation of the program and we will be pursuing other grant opportunities and State Surplus programs to cover some of the larger capital items.

The anticipated annual budget will be about \$51,000 with \$32,000 from license fees offsetting that number, leaving about \$19,000 to be divided by the member communities. In order to operate for one quarter of this fiscal year we expect to need about \$12,750 in operating funds and need to be looking at purchasing the most needed items from the capital list as funds are available. We believe that the \$25,000 available from a Challenge grant would help us get the program off the ground without too much of a burden to the local tax payer.

For Regional shellfish committee and the seven participating communities.

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